GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:334
ANSWERED ON:09.08.2016
Ecological Impact of Mining
Sigriwal Shri Janardan Singh

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware that diversion of large area of forest land for non- forest use including mining purposes has resulted in ecological imbalance in the country;
(b) if so, the details of forest land diverted for such purpose during the last three years and current year, State/UT-wise including Karnataka;
(c)the extent to which mining activities have caused ecological imbalance in the country; and
(d) the steps taken by the Government to curb diversion of forest land for mining purposes and restore ecological balance?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT FOREST, AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ANIL MADHAV DAVE)
(a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 334 ASKED BY SHRI JANARDAN SINGH SIGRIWAL "ECOLOGICAL IMPACT OF MINING" DUE FOR REPLY ON 09.08.2016.

(a & b) No. The forest land diverted has not caused ecological imbalance. Since the enactment of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. the forest land diverted for non-forest use including mining purposes is on average approximately 25,000 Ha per year. The forest alnd diverted from October 1980 to date, State/UT-wise including Karnataka is given in Annexure -I
(c & d) Non forestry activities including mining invariably have an impact on the environment and ecological balance. Deforestation for mining can inter alia lead to soil erosion, and water pollution, impact flora and fauna etc. However whenever forest clearances are given for use of forest land for non forestry purposes the same is done as stipulated under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Under the provisions of this Act, the approval of the Central Government for diversion of forest land is granted to the State/UT Government for various categories of projects. The project developers/user agencies whose proposals have been forwarded by the State Government and granted approval by the Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 belong to Central, State and Private sectors. The details of various categories of projects of these project developers for which diversion of forest land is accorded by the Central Government sought by the State Government is given in Annexure-II.
Mitigative measures in the form of general, standard and specific conditions are mandated with every clearance granted.
General conditions inter-alia include raising of Compensatory Afforestation (CA), imposition of Net Present Value (NPV) to reduce the adverse impact of the diversion of forest land, demarcation of boundary of the diverted forest land, minimum tree felling, arrangement of alternate fuels, etc.
Standard conditions specific to projects viz. hydel, mining, road, irrigation, thermal, transmission lines, etc. as are also stipulated in the approvals granted for diversion of forest land. Standard conditions inter-alia includes phase wise mining operations, management of safety zone, reclamation of quarry, conservation of topsoil, preparation and implementation of Catchment Area Treatment Plan, muck disposal plan, maintenance of prescribed Right of Way (RoW). In addition to general and standard conditions, specific conditions are also stipulated in the approval based on the recommendation made by the Forest Advisory Committee.
The Government has taken the following steps to curb diversion of forest land for mining purposes and restore ecological balance. in the forest areas of the country:
1. Use of forest land for non-forest purposes, including mining purposes requires prior approval of Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. To facilitate scrutiny of the proposals seeking prior permission of the Centre Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 in an effective, efficient and transparent manner an elaborate institutional mechanism, both at the Central as well as State/ Union Territory Governments level has been set up.
2. The Central Government having due regard to all or any of the following matters accords approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for mining or reject the same:
(a) Whether the forest land proposed to be used for non-forest purpose forms part of a nature reserve, national park, wildlife sanctuary, biosphere reserve or forms part of the habitat of any endangered or threatened species of flora and fauna or of an area lying in severely eroded catchment;
(b) Whether the State Government or the other authority has certified that it has considered all other alternatives and that no other alternatives in the circumstances are feasible and that the required area is the minimum needed for the purpose; and
(c) Whether the State Government or the other authority undertakes to provide at its cost for the acquisition of land of an equivalent area and afforestation thereof.
3. Central Government while according approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 stipulates appropriate mitigative measures, such as, creation and maintenance of compensatory afforestation, realization of Net Present Value of the diverted forest land, implementation of wildlife conservation plan (wherever required), phased reclamation of mined out area, demarcation of boundary of mining lease etc. A copy of the approval accorded by the Central Government is uploaded on website of the Ministry to place it in public domain.

4. In case a proposal involves diversion of forest land located within a protected area notified in accordance with the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, approval of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) and Hon'ble Supreme Court is required to be obtained by the concerned user agency before grant of approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Similarly, in case the forestland proposed for diversion is located within the duly notified eco-sensitive zone around boundary of a protected area, EIA of the project needs to be placed before the Standing Committee of NBWL. In case Eco-sensitive zone has not been notified, 10 km distance from the boundary of such protected area shall be treated as eco-sensitive zone. The Standing Committee of NBWL stipulates additional safeguard to minimize impacts of such projects on wildlife.

5. Adequate safeguards are already in place to ensure that approvals under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of forest land for mining are accorded only after ascertaining that the area of forest land to be diverted is bare minimum and its diversion for non-forest purpose/Mining is unavoidable.

Further in addition to the above, the regular monitoring of the forest areas, after approval by the Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for carrying out mining activities, is conducted by the State Governments and concerned Regional Office of the Ministry to ensure that no violations occur and conditions mandated in the approval are complied with. Besides this, user agencies are also required to submit the annual self-compliance of conditions stipulated in the approvals accorded by the Central Government. The compensatory afforestation works are also monitored through regular inspections, quarterly progress reports, third party monitoring and e-green watch programme launched under the supervision of the Forest Survey of India, Dehradun.

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